Lagerstroemia x ‘Tuscarora’  
‘Tuscarora’ Crapemyrtle

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INTRODUCTION

A long period of striking flower color, attractive fall foliage, fabulous, exfoliating bark and good drought-tolerance all combine to make this Crape-Myrtle a favorite small tree for either formal or informal landscapes (Fig. 1). But this cultivar appears to be less cold hardy than some of the other mildew-resistant selections. It is recommended for planting in urban areas.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Lagerstroemia x ‘Tuscarora’  
Pronunciation: lay-ger-STREE-mee-uh  
Common name(s): ‘Tuscarora’ Crapemyrtle  
Family: Lythraceae  
USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 9A (Fig. 2)  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common  
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 18 to 25 feet  
Spread: 15 to 18 feet  
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms  
Crown shape: vase shape  
Crown density: moderate  
Growth rate: medium  
Texture: medium

Figure 1. Young ‘Tuscarora’ Crapemyrtle.
Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)
**Leaf type:** simple
**Leaf margin:** entire
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong; obovate
**Leaf venation:** pinnate
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches
**Leaf color:** green
**Fall color:** orange; red; yellow
**Fall characteristic:** showy

Flower

**Flower color:** red
**Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval; round
**Fruit length:** < .5 inch
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard
**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
**Breakage:** resistant
**Current year twig color:** brown; green
**Current year twig thickness:** thin

Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained
**Drought tolerance:** high
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate
USE AND MANAGEMENT

The 6- to 12-inch-long clustered coral pink blooms appear on the tips of branches during the summer. The individual flowers are ruffled and crinkly as to appear made of crepe paper. The smooth, peeling bark and multi-branched, open habit of Crape-Myrtle make it ideal for specimen planting where its bright red to orange-colored fall leaves add further interest. The tree is upright-spreading, or vase-shaped, with branches spreading out as they ascend. The tree probably grows 16 to 20 feet tall with a 15 to 18-foot spread. Lower branches droop as they grow older, and they will need to be removed to show off the bark and interesting trunk form.

Pruning should be done in late winter or early in the spring before growth begins because it is easier to see which branches to prune. New growth can be pinched during the growing season to increase branchiness and flower number. Pruning methods vary from topping to cutting Crape-Myrtle nearly to the ground each spring to the removal of dead wood and old flower stalks only. Topping creates several long, thin branches from each cut which droop down under the weight of the flowers. This practice disfigures the nice trunk and branch structure. Lower branches are often thinned to show off the trunk form and color. You can remove the spent flower heads to encourage a second flush of flowers and to prevent formation of the brown fruits. Since cultivars are now available in a wide range of growth heights, severe pruning should not be necessary to control size. Severe pruning can stimulate basal sprouting which can become a constant nuisance, requiring regular removal. Some Crape-Myrtle trees sprout from the base of the trunk and roots even without severe heading.

Crape-Myrtle grows best in full sun with rich, moist soil but will tolerate less hospitable positions in the landscape just as well, once it becomes established. It grows well in limited soil spaces in urban areas such as along boulevards, in parking lots, and in small pavement cutouts if provided with some irrigation. They tolerate clay and alkaline soil well. However, the flowers of some selections may stain car paint. Insect pests are few and ‘Tuscarora’ is resistant to powdery mildew. There are other new cultivars (many developed by the USDA) available which are resistant to powdery mildew.

Many cultivars of Crape-Myrtle are available: hybrid ‘Acoma’, 14 to 16 feet tall, white flowers, purple-red fall foliage, mildew resistant; hybrid ‘Biloxi’, 25 feet tall, pale pink blooms, orange-red fall foliage, hardy and mildew resistant; ‘Cherokee’, 10 to 12 feet, bright red flowers; ‘Powhatan’, 14 to 20 feet, clear yellow fall foliage, medium purple flowers. The hybrid cultivars ‘Natchez’, 30 feet tall, pure white flowers, and ‘Muskogee’, 24 feet tall, light lavender flowers, are hybrids between Lagerstroemia indica and Lagerstroemia fauriei and have greater resistance to mildew. The cultivar ‘Crape Myrtlettes’ have the same color range as the species but only grow to three to four feet high. The National Arboretum releases are generally superior because they have been selected for their disease resistance. These releases may prove
more resistant to powdery mildew in the Deep South, although further testing needs to be done to confirm this.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed.

**Pests**

Aphids often infest the new growth causing an unsightly but harmless sooty mold to grow on the foliage. Heavy aphid infestations cause a heavy black sooty mold which detracts from the tree’s appearance.

**Diseases**

Powdery mildew can severely affect Crape-Myrtle but ‘Tuscarora’ is resistant.